

By [Monica Solano](#)[Print Page](#)

September 01, 2016 5:41PM

'Like starting over': Bluecut Fire victims living in tents, small RVs near burned homes

WEST CAJON VALLEY — As she tends to their three dogs and a few chickens, Mary Almazan calls out to her husband from the tiny wooden shed they now reside in, which stands just a few feet from what remains of their destroyed home.

"I was alone in the house when the fire had happened. I began to grab some clothes but when I turned around and looked out the window the flames were right there. I could feel heat coming from the walls," said Almazan, 50.

Almazan and her husband Moses Almazan, 55, of West Cajon Valley, are two of the 105 victims who lost their homes to the Bluecut Fire. Many are now sleeping in tents or borrowed RVs where their homes used to be.

The 36,000-plus-acre blaze, which began Aug. 16, grew rapidly in the Cajon Pass, forcing the evacuation of more than 82,000 people from some 34,500 homes. While most residents were fortunate to return to undamaged homes, others like the Almazans were not.

The couple is living in their handmade shed, with a mattress and a few blankets situated inside the small wooden structure, until they figure out what to do. Like many affected by the fire, Mary Almazan said they do not have running water or electricity.

"We had to take everything out of the storage unit in order to sleep in there," Moses Almazan said. "We had two mobile homes that caught on fire and we've been hauling all the furniture that was burnt in the fire. I asked for the week off from work as we're still here and continuing to clean up and trying to figure out what to do next."

According to Mary Almazan, her three dogs were left behind when the fire came, but all three survived. One's fur was slightly singed. Another suffered burns around his eyes, tail and hind leg.

The couple also had their own chicken coop, where they raised hens and roosters. All but three chickens survived the flames.

As for personal hygiene, both Mary and Moses Almazan said their friends and family generously opened their homes to allow them to shower. Although their situation seems bad, the two said they are remaining hopeful and are thankful to be alive and well.

"We've called the county and right now they said to wait about a week as they're investigating the problem. We're still waiting for someone to respond to us," Mary Almazan said. "For now, the Red Cross has been helping us with food for us and our animals."

Farther down the road is a young man who now lives in a small RV trailer after losing his home in the fire.

"This house was hand built by my father 20 years ago and he passed away just two years ago," said the young man, who asked not to be identified. "After being evacuated, my niece had turned on the news and my dad's house happened to have been on television. It was something else standing there and watching it burn to nothing."

The young man said he has no electricity, no insurance and all memories of the home turned to ashes.

"This kind of disaster is so hard to get by. It's like starting over," he said. "You just take it step by step and make the best you can of it. The community and my neighbors who also lost their homes have been gathering together to see how we can help each other."

Crystal Armstrong, 63, of Swarthout Canyon, has lived on her property for 30 years and said the home she lost belonged to her mother.

"It's a hard time right now for me and my husband. We lost everything and now we have to live in this tiny trailer that we borrowed from a friend. It's all we can do for now," Armstrong said. "So much was lost, but life moves on. Although there's nothing like your own home."

While trying to make ends meet with the few resources they have, Armstrong admitted some days are harder than others. After the fire burned her home, she had to sell her livestock that survived the flames because she could no longer take care of them.

"My cat was still in the house when it went up in flames," Armstrong said. "When we came back all we found was nothing but a ball of flesh. I had him for 22 years and I don't even have a picture of him because they all burned in the fire."

Armstrong, the Almazans and the others whose homes were lost continue to try to take life one day at a time, hoping the rebuilding process gets easier in the coming days and weeks.

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Mary Almazan stands under a tarp for shade while she talks about how her home was destroyed by the Bluecut Fire. Almazan and her husband are staying on their property, sleeping in a shed, and conducting most of their daily tasks under the tarps. James Quigg, Daily Press

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

San Bernardino terrorist attack legislation to reimburse first responders headed to Governor's office

By Joe Nelson, The Sun

Wednesday, August 31, 2016

The California Senate, with strong bipartisan support, unanimously approved legislation Wednesday that would ensure first responders to the [Dec. 2 terrorist attack](#) in San Bernardino get fully reimbursed for the cost of their response.

The proposed legislation, drafted by Sen. Connie Leyva, D-Chino, now heads to Gov. Jerry Brown for consideration.

On May 31, the Senate, in its [first round of voting](#), unanimously approved Leyva's Senate Bill 1385. Wednesday's final vote of 38-0 cleared the way for the Governor to consider making it law, said Sergio Reyes, Leyva's spokesman.

"Even though more than six months has passed since the horrible attack that took the lives of 14 innocent people and seriously injured even more, the greater San Bernardino area continues to mourn for the families, loved ones and others affected by this tragedy," Leyva said in a statement Wednesday.

As to the first responders, Leyva, in her statement, said, "These brave men and women rushed into a chaotic situation and dealt with its impacts for several days and weeks beyond the initial attack, so I fully believe that they should be eligible to receive 100 percent reimbursement for eligible related costs."

The law, in its current form, caps reimbursement at 75 percent of the state share cost not covered by the federal government, which according to Leyva cuts deeply into local governments having to make up the difference, affecting their ability to fund other essential services to taxpayers.

Police Chief Jarrod Burguan said in a telephone interview Wednesday that, following the mass shooting that claimed the lives of 14 people, 13 of them county employees, he and Sheriff John McMahon made multiple trips to Washington and Sacramento to persuade the government to reimburse first responders for expenses incurred in their response to the deadly attack, which also wounded 22 people.

"We greatly appreciate their efforts to help the city recover from the economic impact of the incident," Burguan said Wednesday.

San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Chairman James Ramos, in a telephone interview Wednesday, thanked Leyva for carrying the legislation and going to bat for the county. He said the Senate's approval of Leyva's bill now allows the county to focus its energies on upgrading security at the county's more than 500 owned or leased buildings encompassing 12 million square feet.

In May, the Board of Supervisors [approved three-year contracts](#) with two security consultants, Irvine-based TRC Engineers Inc. and Los Angeles-based Guidepost Solutions LLC., to conduct the assessments and provide recommendations to the county.

“We need to continue moving forward on security measures and to make sure there’s a safe environment for our workers,” Ramos said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160831/san-bernardino-terrorist-attack-legislation-to-reimburse-first-responders-headed-to-governors-office>

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Redlands Daily Facts (<http://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com>)

San Bernardino terrorist attack victim's love for Yucaipa neighborhood, daughter honored

Neighbors celebrate attack victim's love for his daughter and Yucaipa's Chapman Heights Community Association

By Sandra Emerson, Redlands Daily Facts

Thursday, September 1, 2016



YUCAIPA >> Before his death on Dec. 2, [Robert Adams](#) enjoyed helping his neighbors, and often could be seen spending time with his daughter at the park near his home.

To show their appreciation for Adams' commitment to their community, members of the Chapman Heights Community Association installed a memorial bench at the park in his honor.

"Our family is grateful for this recognition," Adams' widow, Summer, said in an emailed statement. "Robert loved living in this community and serving on the HOA committee."

She and the couple's daughter, Savannah, visited the memorial after it was installed a couple of months ago in the park on Pinehurst Drive.

"Pinehurst Park was a very special place to Robert," Summer Adams said. "He visited often with Savannah, and this was bonding time for the two of them. It means a great deal to have this bench with his name there. Now, when I bring Savannah to the park, we sit on his bench and I tell her about how her daddy enjoyed bringing her here to play."

Adams, 40, was one of the 14 people killed during the [Dec. 2 terrorist attack](#) in San Bernardino.

The news of his death was a shock to association members, who held their annual appreciation dinner a few days later.

"You never think that these things would happen," said Antonia Vizcarra, the association's community manager.

Adams sat on the association's enforcement committee and was tasked with ensuring residents followed the community's rules and regulations. His job as an environmental health specialist for the county reflected in his association duties, said David Deike, vice president of the association.

"He was always fair with the homeowners," Deike said. "He wanted to help them. That was his job, too, outside the community, was to help people comply with the rules."

Adams rarely missed an association meeting and sometimes brought his daughter along. He helped get word out to residents about state legislation prohibiting homeowners associations from fining residents with brown lawns after the drought, Vizcarra added.

The association wanted to memorialize Adams' commitment and decided installing a memorial bench in a place he enjoyed and where neighbors frequently visit was appropriate.

“We really appreciate everything he did,” said William Evans, president of the association. “This was the least we could do for him, to remember everything he did for the whole community, not just our little part of it.”

URL: <http://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/social-affairs/20160901/san-bernardino-terrorist-attack-victims-love-for-yucaipa-neighborhood-daughter-honored>

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What's changing for Nocturnal Wonderland 2016?

By [RYAN HAGEN](#)

2016-09-01 18:53:51



Live Nation will do some things differently at this year's rave-like Nocturnal Wonderland Festival.

Such events are extremely popular — the 20th anniversary show in 2015 drew 85,000 people, according to Pasquale Rotella, CEO of host Insomniac — but also controversial.

RELATED: [Supervisors to revisit rave-like events in Devore](#)

[Three people died at the electronic dance Hard Summer Music festival](#) in Fontana in July, reigniting a push to ban rave-like events at Devore's San

Manuel Amphitheater. Live Nation's contract, which allows the entertainment company to host up to four electronic dance shows a year at San Manuel Amphitheater, [expires in October](#).

And neighbor complaints led San Bernardino County Supervisor Janice Rutherford — who is also leading the ban effort — to push for changes for this year's festival. They are:

- Stationing a deputy on Devore Road to prevent festival attendees from parking in the community. A sign will be posted reading "Residents only."

RELATED: [Hard Summer Music deaths were UCR student, air-quality intern](#)

- Live Nation will hire a third-party professional sound-monitoring service to respond to noise complaints.

"In the past, it's been done by Live Nation/Insomniac staff," Rutherford spokesman Scott Vanhorne said in an email. During this year's festival, "a staff member from (San Bernardino County) Regional Parks will tag along with sound monitors. They will have a handout with the county's noise standards with them so everyone knows what's allowed and what's not in terms of noise from the event."

RELATED: [Who's playing Nocturnal Wonderland?](#)

- Additionally, Live Nation is distributing written notices to Devore residents with a hotline people can call to report noise complaints. And the stages will be oriented to decrease the amount of noise, Vanhorne said.

- The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, with which Live Nation contracts for security and traffic control, will change the usual traffic plan: More than 100 deputies will be deployed to local neighborhoods, parking lots, amphitheater and park entrances, at the Glen Helen Park campground, and in the festival area, said Deputy Olivia Bozek.

RELATED: [Coachella 2016: Electronic dance music is big business](#)

- Finally, a sheriff's medical helicopter will also be on site, as mandated for all electronic music festivals at the amphitheater, Bozek said.

Insomniac CEO Rotella said in an email that safety has always been his top priority.

"I am so proud of our health and safety measures," he wrote. "We have the best teams in the world working at our shows and we are committed to setting the standard and ensuring that everyone who walks through our gates gets back home safely. I need our events to be good enough for my own kids to attend."

Safety measures include manned free water refill stations, age restrictions, medical tents and volunteers who walk the premises looking for problems.

Rotella also said that banning rave-like events would only increase the danger.

"I think that banning established events from San Manuel Amphitheater so people are driven out to farther cities is irresponsible and reckless," Rotella wrote.

"Dance music is loved by several generations and it has crossed over to the mainstream," Rotella wrote. "Forcing the young people of today into unregulated underground parties or events in the middle of nowhere — just so it's not your problem — rather than making these events safer, is something I cannot understand.

"I want my kids to step out my front door and not have to go far to experience the best produced, safest and supervised shows possible," Rotella continued, "instead of events that are far away and possibly not managed properly. We are not going anywhere."

Nocturnal Wonderland goes from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. Friday through Sunday at San Manuel Amphitheater, 2575 Glen Helen Parkway, Devore.

Staff writers Joe Nelson and Wes Woods contributed to this report.

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VETERANS DIPLOMA PROJECT: Application Deadline September 23

in [For Your Information](#) / by [Michael P. Neufeld](#) / on September 2, 2016 at 12:01 am /

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San Bernardino County is saluting veterans with the presentation of high school diplomas to those whose high school graduation was interrupted by military service or internment in a Japanese American camp. (File Photo)

By **Michael P. Neufeld**

San Bernardino, CA – The San Bernardino County Operation Recognition Veterans Diploma Project — now in its eighth year — is designed to award diplomas to men and women whose high school education was interrupted due to military service or internment in a Japanese American camp.



The deadline to apply for the CLASS OF 2016 is Friday, September 23, at 4 p.m.

VETERANS DIPLOMA PROJECT

The County Department of Veterans Affairs, in cooperation with the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, is offering an opportunity to provide veterans and internees who qualify for a high school diploma, as authorized through the California Education Code.

The program will award diplomas to qualified applicants at a presentation on November 9 at Serrano High School in Phelan. Applicants will be notified of their status by October 5.

There is no cost to apply or to receive a high school diploma.

ELIGIBILITY & APPLICATIONS

Veterans — residing in San Bernardino County — who served in and received an honorable discharge from World War II, the Korean War or the Vietnam War; or individuals who were interned in a Japanese American relocation camp are eligible to participate.

Applications can be downloaded from the County Schools' website at [VETERANS DIPLOMA PROJECT](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For assistance with verification of military service and/or discharge papers, contact the County Department of Veterans Affairs at (866) 472-8387 or (909) 387-5516.

For more information, contact Samantha Koker at County Schools at (909) 386-2412.

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Mojave Desert solar plant still struggling to prevent bird incinerations



By **Louis Sahagun**

SEPTEMBER 2, 2016, 3:00 AM

A macabre fireworks show unfolds each day along I-15 west of Las Vegas, as birds fly into concentrated beams of sunlight and are instantly incinerated, leaving wisps of white smoke against the blue desert sky.

Workers at the Ivanpah Solar Plant have a name for the spectacle: “Streamers.”

And the image-conscious owners of the [390-megawatt plant](#) say they are trying everything they can think of to stop the slaughter.

Federal biologists say about 6,000 birds die from collisions or immolation annually while chasing flying insects around the facility’s three 40-story towers, which catch sunlight from five square miles of garage-door-size mirrors to drive the plant’s power-producing turbines.

“

We're doing everything we can to reduce the number of birds killed out here

— David David Knox, spokesman for NRG Energy Inc., owner of Ivanpah solar plant

In addition, coyotes eat dozens of road runners trapped along the outside of a perimeter fence that was designed to prevent federally threatened desert tortoises from wandering onto the property.

In an interview this week, David Knox, a spokesman for NRG Energy Inc., said the Ivanpah team has been testing an ever-changing combination of tactics to minimize bird deaths and injuries since it began sending power to the grid in 2014. He acknowledged, however, that the results have been “modest.”

“We’re doing everything we can to reduce the number of birds killed out here,” Knox said. “If there’s a silver bullet out there, maybe we’ll find it.”

So far, plant workers have replaced flood lights with LED bulbs, which attract fewer insects and birds that eat them.

They have rearranged the mirrors to reduce birds’ window of exposure.

They have fitted each tower with machines that emit a nonlethal avian respiratory irritant derived from grape juice concentrate, a method typically used to keep birds from congregating on agricultural fields and commercial centers.

And they have attached anti-perching spikes to the towers’ frames, along with devices that broadcast digital recordings of loud, high-pitched shrieking noises.

“We know these deterrents are effective in general commercial use,” Knox said. “Are they as effective in a solar energy plant? We’re trying to figure that out.”

Another promising proposal, said Doug Davis, Ivanpah’s environmental manager, is to install “road runner exits” along the perimeter fence. That idea calls for cutting holes in the fence — about 8 inches in diameter and 18 inches above the ground — to allow road runners to sprint into the compound to avoid becoming meals for hungry coyotes.

“We’ll start with a pilot program of 12 road-runner exits,” he said. “If they’re effective, we’ll add more.”

The development of large-scale solar energy facilities on public land in the desert has been a top priority of the Obama administration as it seeks to ease the nation’s dependence on fossil fuels and curb global warming.

A Department of Energy loan guarantee enabled construction of the \$2.2-billion, project that supporters touted as a showcase of world-class technology and environmentally friendly development.

Environmentalists, however, were critical of establishing the plant in a nearly pristine portion of the Mojave Desert that is home to colonies of desert tortoises and a refuge for birds migrating along the Pacific Flyway.

Unusually heavy rains in the region this year have produced stretches of fresh greenery and flowers teeming with insects. Resident birds such as nighthawks and migrant species including yellow warblers have been feasting on caterpillars, grasshoppers, dragonflies, beetles, bees and wasps — though far more bugs get turned to ash by the solar beams.

Watched through binoculars, “streamers” spiral constantly through the superheated air surrounding Ivanpah’s towers.

“

Ivanpah... continues to operate as though there’s an endless supply of birds to burn.

— Garry George, Audubon California

“Ivanpah is a bird sink — and an cautionary tale unfolding on public lands,” said Garry George, renewable energy project director for Audubon California. “It continues to operate as though there’s an endless supply of birds to burn.”

The company is collaborating with state and federal regulators and wildlife agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to staunch bird fatalities before they imperil international avian populations protected by the Migratory Bird Act.

But progress has been hampered by disputes between company officials who suggest that consultants have exaggerated the number of birds killed and federal wildlife authorities who believe the estimates are too low.

“It may take another nine months of data to determine what is actually going on at Ivanpah in terms of bird mortalities and the effectiveness of various deterrents,” said Amedee Brickly, deputy chief of the Fish and Wildlife Service’s migratory bird program. “Eventually, we hope to transport what we learn to nations around the world developing their own solar energy programs.”

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MORE LOCAL NEWS

[Hillary Clinton's brother-in-law due in Los Angeles County court on DUI charges](#)

The Story Behind San Bernardino's Long Bankruptcy

Unlike Detroit or Stockton, this California city's insolvency can't be blamed on debt or pensions.

BY: [Liz Farmer](#) | August 25, 2016

Four years ago this month, San Bernardino, Calif., filed for Chapter 9 protection. Today, it's still in Chapter 9 - the longest municipal bankruptcy in recent memory.

Why so long? Many blame it on San Bernardino's lengthy and convoluted charter, a document that gives so much authority to so many officials that it's completely ineffective. "It gets everybody in everybody else's business," said City Manager Mark Scott. "And it keeps anybody from doing anything."

As a result, officials have spent the last two years trying to ensure the current charter is not part of the city's future. A specially appointed committee is proposing to completely overhaul it.

At issue is that unlike many California cities that either have a strong mayor/council form of management or a strong city manager government, San Bernardino's is a hybrid, doling out authority to both sides. For example, fire and police chiefs are appointed by the mayor and subject to approval by the council, but report to both the mayor and city manager. This confusing structure played a role in the city's road to insolvency. "You'd have to say," Scott said, "the charter made it almost impossible to succeed."

The cause of the city's bankruptcy obviously can't be pegged to just one thing. But other municipal bankruptcies have tended to falter thanks to major ticket items. For instance, Stockton, Calif., can largely blame its bankruptcy on bond debt and retiree health-care costs. Detroit had loads of municipal and pension debt.

But in the case of San Bernardino, an inland city of about 200,000 people, insolvency was sneakier. "It was simply an accumulation of spending more than the revenues they had to support it," said Andrew Belknap, who is regional vice president of Management Partners and has worked with other struggling California cities.

Belknap said the city's overly complicated system of checks and balances in its 48-page charter and extreme turnover essentially created a stalled government: Between 2004 and 2014, the city cycled through five city managers, five police chiefs, four finance directors and five public works directors. The situation was so disorganized that by the time officials realized the full magnitude of the city's finances, it was too late to declare a financial emergency. Instead, San Bernardino officials had to declare insolvency or they weren't going to make payroll. "They didn't have the political and management systems in place to see this coming or act ahead of time," Belknap said.

About two years into the court proceedings, officials realized that they needed to address the management confusion in order to give the city a fighting chance after it emerged from bankruptcy. The current document needs so much explanation it has been supplemented over the years by more than 100 city attorney opinions. Even rules on personnel management had made it into the charter, like directions on how to compensate police and fire fighters and defining which public safety positions had to be filled in by sworn officers.

So for a little more than a year, a charter committee has been developing a new proposal based on the charters of similarly sized California cities and incorporating recommendations made by the National Civic League. The proposed charter-- now whittled down to 11 pages -- includes a key change: moving to a council-manager form of government. If approved, the city manager will have executive authority that's held in check by the council. The mayor will still be elected but will act as the legislative head of the council. The charter also would make the city clerk and attorney appointed positions instead of elected.

Residents will vote on the proposed charter this November. It's not a requirement that voters approve it for the city to exit bankruptcy. Even without that change, officials expect to emerge from Chapter 9 protection sometime in the spring. But some believe the city doesn't have much of a future in a post-bankruptcy world without it. "I don't foresee the city coming out of all this with this charter," said Scott. "Recruiters don't want to recruit anybody [here] until we fix it."

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/topics/finance/gov-story-behind-san-bernardinios-long-bankruptcy.html>



Magnitude 3.2 earthquake rattles Morongo Valley area

By [ANNE MILLERBERND](#)

2016-09-02 09:07:33



An earthquake struck just northwest of Morongo Valley on Friday morning, Sept. 2.

The quake was recorded with a magnitude of 3.2 at 8:42 a.m. with a depth of about 5 miles according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The temblor was about 8 miles northwest of Morongo Valley, 14 miles northeast of Banning, 14 miles southeast of Big Bear and 11 miles northeast of Cabazon, according to the USGS.

Did you feel it? Email us at talktous@pe.com.

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Molina Healthcare creates 100 jobs with administrative hub in San Bernardino

By Jim Steinberg, The Sun

Thursday, September 1, 2016

SAN BERNARDINO >> Long Beach-based Molina Healthcare Inc. has opened an administrative office hub here that employs about 100 people, officials announced Thursday.

“We appreciate your vote of confidence in bringing these jobs,” San Bernardino Mayor Carry Davis, said during the formal announcement of the 20,000-square-foot office at 550 E. Hospitality Lane.

“We are making changes here after some difficult times,” Davis said, alluding to both the Dec. 2 terrorist attack and the city’s bankruptcy.

“We felt the pain” from Dec. 2, Deborah Miller, president of Molina Healthcare in California, said. “Some of our staff lost family members.”

The Hospitality Lane office will help provide administrative services for the 175,000 Molina members in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, Richard Chambers, Molina senior vice president for policy and government advocacy, said during Thursday’s formal announcement. The office quietly opened with a skeleton staff late last year.

The San Bernardino location provided “beautiful office space,” good parking, a safe work environment and the convenience of nearby restaurants and stores, Chambers said.

“Employees just love it here,” he said.

Many of the hub administrative functions that now will be provided in San Bernardino were managed from an office in Pomona, he said. The Pomona office still serves that region.

Services housed in the new San Bernardino hub include healthcare services, contracting, provider services, community engagement and disability and senior access, officials said.

Prior to Pomona, a smaller number of administrative jobs were housed in a Colton building which offered no opportunity for expansion, Chambers said.

Josie Gonzales, 5th District County Supervisor, said it was good to land a plan that helps medically underserved people in San Bernardino, following the departure of another one.

In 2013, Inland Empire Health Plan moved about 700 employees from 325 West Hospitality Lane to Rancho Cucamonga. The main IEHP office was little more than a mile west of the new Molina Healthcare location.

Both Molina and IEHP serve economically disadvantaged clients.

Molina, which has 4.3 million members in 12 states and Puerto Rico, operates satellite administrative offices for the two-county area in Corona and Victorville and plans to open another office in Rancho Mirage.

In San Bernardino County, its clinic offices are in Adelanto, Colton, Fontana, Ontario, Rialto, San Bernardino and Victorville, according to the Molina website.

Patients are not treated at the Hospitality Lane site.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/health/20160901/molina-healthcare-creates-100-jobs-with-administrative-hub-in-san-bernardino>

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Eight more samples test positive for West Nile Virus

Source: West Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District | Posted: Thursday, September 1, 2016 6:28 pm

On Thursday, September 1 the West Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District (WVMVCD) detected eight more mosquito samples that were positive for West Nile virus (WNV), making a total of 71 mosquito samples tested positive for West Nile virus in 2016 within the district.

The locations where the new WNV-positive mosquito samples were collected indicate a continued expansion of the virus activity in our district. The District expects this trend to continue into September and October, as long as mosquitoes are active.

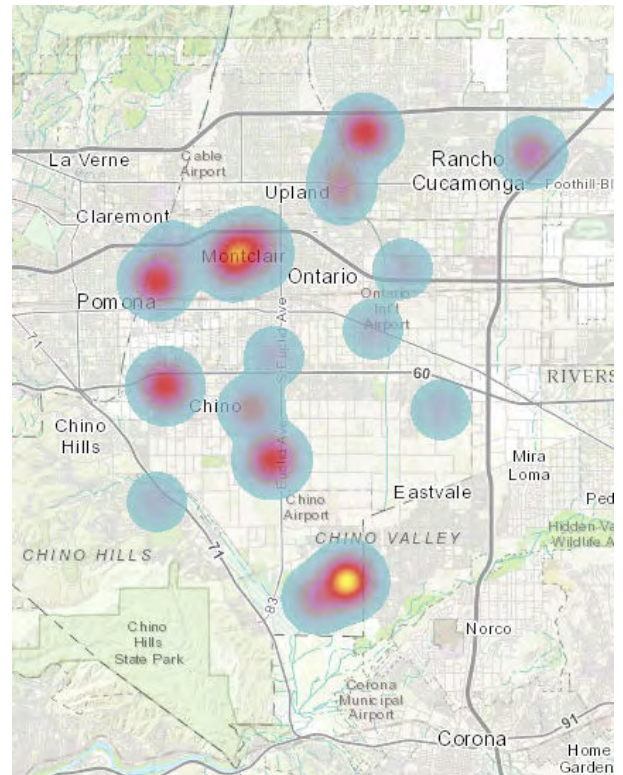
This news comes right before the Labor Day weekend, when many of our residents will be celebrating by barbecuing, going to parks, attending parades, and spending time outdoors. It is very important that all our residents use a CDC recommended repellent, such as those containing DEET, Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus, or IR3535 when outdoors this weekend to reduce their risk of being bitten by mosquitoes.

Be sure to read the application directions for any repellents you choose to use.

Making sure there are no standing water sources where mosquitoes can lay eggs is also an important part of reducing your risk of mosquito-borne disease.

The map shows WNV positive mosquito samples and areas of increased risk.

For more information visit www.wvmvcd.org.



Eight more samples test positive for West Nile Virus

Eight more samples test positive for West Nile Virus

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

Rancho Cucamonga now has a place to retire flags properly, here's where

By Liset Márquez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Thursday, September 1, 2016



RANCHO CUCAMONGA >> Residents who want to properly dispose their worn American flag now have a place to go, the [Archibald Library](#).

There, they will find a large white box resembling a mailbox, where they can drop the flag.

The project is the brainchild of Jacob Fergot, who made it his Eagle Scout project. The box is 5 feet tall by 20 inches deep by 2 feet wide.

Jacob's mother, Kerri, said her son made the box with the help of several companies who donated their services, which included powder coating and stenciling. Jacob and his dad stripped the box and painted portions of it, while his older brothers helped sand and polish.

When Jacob was looking for an idea for his Eagle Scout project, he said he was inspired by his family.

"I have grandparents and great-grandparents that served our country, and I think it's important that our flags are retired properly and there's not a place in Rancho that I know of that you can do this, so I wanted to make that available to people," he said.

The library is at 7368 Archibald Ave.

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FORMER TWENTYNINE PALMS CHAMBER PRESIDENT CHARGED WITH EMBEZZLEMENT

By Z107.7 News, on September 2nd, 2016

The District Attorney's office has filed criminal charges against the former president of the Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce. On Monday, Carey Alderson, 46, was charged with embezzlement by an employee for allegedly using the chamber's credit card to pay his personal gas and electric bills, totaling \$678.65. The alleged theft was first noticed in April, at which time Executive Director Christine Hoenigmann contacted Alderson. The Sheriff's Department original report states that Alderson made one payment of \$160 to repay the debt, but nothing since. Alderson resigned as Chamber president July 21, and the Chamber notified Sheriff's deputies the next week. Carey Alderson, who was also named as the chair of the Twentynine Palms Cemetery District in February, is set to be arraigned on the embezzlement charge September 21. In 2004, Alderson pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of false imprisonment, and in 2003, a charge of driving under the influence was dismissed in exchanged for a guilty plea of drunk in public. Alderson ran unsuccessfully for Twentynine Palms City Council in 2010.

September 2nd, 2016 | Tags: [embezzlement](#), [morongo basin](#), [san bernardino county](#), [twentynine palms](#), [twentynine palms chamber of commerce](#) | Category: [Local News](#)

Share vision for monument

Posted: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 3:49 pm

YUCCA VALLEY — The Bureau of Land Management is inviting the public to share what they value most within the newly designated Mojave Trails National Monument for the BLM to consider as the monument management planning process begins. Several sessions are planned, including one here in Yucca Valley from 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 31, at the Yucca Valley Community Center

A series of envisioning sessions will enable the public to provide comments on specific interests and concerns that will assist the BLM in the development of the Mojave Trails National Monument Management Plan. These sessions are in advance of public scoping meetings which will begin in the fall.

“We want the public to help us determine how their new monument should be managed,” states Mike Ahrens, Needles Field Office manager. “Public input helps the BLM develop a lasting framework for important land use and resource management decisions.”

The BLM will work collaboratively with the public, cooperating agencies, and partners to begin identifying the vision for the planning area and key management priorities to be addressed in the upcoming draft monument management plan.

For further information contact, Stephen Razo, External Affairs, California Desert District: srazo@blm.gov.

Legislature declines to add 'environmental justice' members to Southern California air quality board



South Coast Air Quality Management District board members John Benoit and Joseph Lyou attend a public meeting on April 1. (Irfan Khan / Los Angeles Times)

By **Tony Barboza and Liam Dillon**

SEPTEMBER 1, 2016, 1:35 PM

The state Legislature has rejected a controversial measure that would have shifted the political balance of Southern California's air-quality board by adding three state-appointed "environmental justice" members to represent low-income communities suffering from pollution.

The legislation to expand the South Coast Air Quality Management District board from 13 to 16 members fell 11 votes short of passage in the Assembly late Wednesday, with Republicans and members of a business-aligned bloc of Democrats in opposition.

The measure by State Senate leader Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles) had sought to shake up the smog-fighting agency after Republicans gained a majority of seats earlier this year, vowing to ease the burden of its regulations on polluting industries.

If the bill had passed, the governor and state legislative leaders would have gained three new appointments and influence over an agency charged with reducing air pollution across a vast basin of 17 million people in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

The oil industry and some business groups fought the legislation as a threat to local control of the region's clean air agency. In June, [the AQMD board itself voted to oppose the legislation](#).

The measure's defeat came as the Legislature sent the governor a number of other bills championed by environmental justice advocates and aimed at directing the benefits of California's climate change and pollution-reduction programs to poor and predominantly Latino communities with the worst air quality.

Similar legislation signed by Gov. Jerry Brown last year expanded the state Air Resources Board by adding two members to represent areas where poor people are affected by pollution.

Opponents of the AQMD measure criticized it on the Assembly floor as a power grab by state politicians upset that Republicans had taken majority control of the board.

"This sort of political manipulation simply undermines the faith of Californians," said Assemblyman Travis Allen (R-Huntington Beach). "It sets a dangerous precedent that election results deemed unacceptable in Sacramento will be overturned by arbitrarily changing the rules and restacking the deck."

Supporters said the board needs greater representation from low-income people of color.

De León said Thursday he was disappointed but expects a "more progressive" member to replace Republican L.A. County Supervisor [Michael D. Antonovich](#) on the AQMD board when he is termed out later this year.

"Any time people of color are excluded from decision-making processes directly tied to their health and well-being, fundamental change is needed," De León said in an emailed statement. "In the long run, this board demands an overhaul."

The AQMD is the nation's most powerful local air pollution agency, regulating tens of thousands of businesses in the region with the worst smog. It is run by a board made up of 10 city council members, mayors and county supervisors who are chosen locally and three members appointed by state legislative leaders and the governor.

The panel has come under attack in recent months from Democratic state legislators and environmentalists, who say its new leadership is placing the concerns of regulated businesses above the health of residents and suffers from a lack of diversity. All 10 of the locally chosen elected officials on the board are white.

In a GOP-led effort last fall, Orange County elected officials unseated AQMD board member Miguel Pulido, Santa Ana's Democratic mayor, and replaced him with Dwight Robinson, a Republican city councilman from Lake Forest. That left no Latinos on the board and gave Republicans a 7-6 majority on the panel starting in February.

Once seated, the new majority fired the agency's longtime executive officer and replaced him with a former industry consultant. It also voted to uphold controversial amendments to a pollution-trading program for refineries and other major polluters that were backed by the oil industry.

While the board's Republican members deny trying to roll back smog-fighting regulations, they have been outspoken about reducing the burden of regulations on businesses and have moved to shift the priorities of an agency that for decades has pioneered some of the nation's toughest pollution-cutting rules.

The district's [recently released air quality plan](#) gives priority to “nonregulatory” measures and relies on finding billions in incentive money to encourage businesses to adopt cleaner technologies.

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UPDATES:

1:35 p.m.: This article was updated with a statement from state Senate leader Kevin de León.

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Gov. Jerry Brown convinces counties association not to oppose parole measure



Gov. Jerry Brown leaves a meeting of the California State Assn. of Counties in Sacramento. (John Myers/Los Angeles Times)

The state organization representing county governments decided Thursday to not take a position on Proposition 57, the revamping of California's prison parole system that is being championed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

Brown made his case at a meeting of the California State Assn. of Counties' board of directors in Sacramento. The group also heard from Merced County Dist. Atty. Larry Morse, who opposes Prop 57.

The measure, if approved by voters, would allow new opportunities of parole for some prison inmates convicted of nonviolent crimes.

While some county officials had reportedly favored the association formally opposing Prop. 57, CSAC leaders ultimately voted to abstain.

"That's a good thing," Brown said as he exited the meeting Thursday afternoon.

The governor said he told county officials that the prison sentencing system that existed in California prior to 1977 -- the year he agreed to allow strict sentencing criteria -- was a better way to go.

"It worked better," Brown said. "The recidivism rate was lower."

Prop. 57 opponents, including the California District Attorneys Assn., argue the initiative would still allow inmates with a violent history to be released early. The official ballot argument against Prop. 57 refers to the state parole board -- which would have the discretion to release inmates -- as "state government bureaucrats."

"It is true that the parole board can make a decision," Brown said after speaking at the CSAC meeting. "They have discretion, just like the district attorneys who have unfettered discretion to charge or not."



HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS

Counties turn to 'transition specialists' to help students in court schools succeed

By [Michael Collier](#) | September 1, 2016 | [No Comments](#)

Counties across California are stepping up efforts to ensure that students going to schools in juvenile detention facilities make it back to their communities — and have a fighting chance to succeed in school and life.

In addition to help from caseworkers and counselors, many counties are hiring additional support staff, called “transition specialists,” to help students bridge the gap between “court schools,” which they may attend for a few weeks, and an educational placement allowing them to graduate from high school.

At least sixteen California counties, from Butte in the north to Riverside in the south, have hired transition specialists, according to the [California County Superintendents Educational Services Association](#), which oversees county court schools.

The support such specialists can provide can be key to ensuring that students enrolled in court schools have the best chance of success. On an average day, about 7,000 students attend these schools, but over the course of a year the total number of students served is several times higher.

Lauren Brady, an attorney in the Berkeley office of Public Counsel, a public interest law firm, said the encouraging news is that the state “has started to recognize that this

is a population of students who need attention and support,” including better instruction in court schools.

But more needs to be done, Brady said. “What do we do to keep young people connected to school?” she asked. “And how can schools find ways to keep kids in the system rather than out of the system?”

That task has become more manageable, as the number of young people in court schools has been dropping by about 1,000 students per year since the 2012-2013 school year.

REACHING OUT TO STUDENTS

Josue Valdez, the son of Guatemalan immigrants, is one of the students who benefited from transition specialists and other support staff in Alameda County’s Juvenile Justice Center in San Leandro, just south of Oakland. As a teenager, he landed in detention centers across the state for offenses including assault, graffiti and vandalism.

His juvenile court teachers told him he was smart. But he lacked drive. At 17, he got into another fight.

“That’s when they sent me to camp for eight months,” said Valdez, now 20, referring to Camp Sweeney, a residential facility in Alameda County’s Juvenile Hall complex.

He could have easily “graduated” to an adult prison but for a probation officer and a teacher in the Alameda County Juvenile Court School, who saw his potential and reached out to him.

Transition specialists work directly with students and spend lots of time verifying records for students’ release and transition to other schools, while compiling and evaluating student transcripts and coordinating assessments.

“My fundamental mission is to get kids back into school as soon as possible,” said Jordan Seiden, a re-entry specialist in the [transition center](#) at Alameda County’s Juvenile Justice Center. The transition center was one of the first of its kind when it opened in 2009.

Other counties have opened transition centers since then. Nicole Rocha, who administers two juvenile court schools in Tulare County, said she had one employee last year. This year the county has hired four transition specialists to supplement its services.

“Our kids have a lot of needs, and it’s been nonstop since we started,” Rocha said. “We are here to help get them on the right track.” By their second week on the job, the new employees were working with more than 100 students and their families. One hurdle was placing students in appropriate classes.

TRACKING EVERY STUDENT

Orange County’s Department of Education, with 27 school districts, has one of the state’s largest networks supporting students in transition. It employs seven transition specialists, in addition to school counselors. The staffers must track each student from court school to a public school, said Laura Strachan, assistant superintendent for the county.

“We make sure that students are enrolled in the right classes and that the transition is seamless,” Strachan said. “I think it’s really exciting. Now we have ways to help them, and they have goals in mind.”

Better transition for students from detention to their home schools is one recommendation of a recent [highly critical report on the state’s court schools](#) by the Youth Law Center, an advocacy group in San Francisco.

“The court school system is failing to meet the educational needs of its students in a profound way,” the report said, adding that court schools must do a better job to serve a largely minority population who often lag far behind their peers academically.

California’s county superintendents association [challenged the report](#), saying the advocacy group misinterpreted state data on dropout, suspension and truancy rates in court schools.

“Our kids have a lot of needs, and it’s been nonstop since we started,” said Nicole Rocha, who administers two juvenile court schools in Tulare County.

Jennifer Rodriguez, executive director of the Youth Law Center, told EdSource that her organization stands by its criticisms of court schools and its recommendations for improving them. She does not plan to revise data in the report. In an [email to the superintendents group](#), she said she would like to work with them “to get a more accurate picture of the status and progress of students in court schools.”

Forty-seven of California’s 58 county offices of education oversee court schools. Some students who recently attended court schools told a July forum, co-sponsored by the Youth Law Center, that instruction was lacking. The students said they remember being in classes where teachers paid little or no attention to them.

SHORTER SENTENCES

The increased focus on helping juvenile offenders comes as they are spending less time in juvenile court schools. In 2014, California voters approved Proposition 47, which reduced many sentences for nonviolent drug and property crimes from felonies to misdemeanors.

In Alameda County, that means average detentions of 10 days instead of two weeks, officials said. In Orange County, it means average stays of a month rather than six months. Shorter stays mean speedier transitions for students going to traditional or alternative schools.

Based on the state's Local Control Funding Formula, court schools receive more funding per student than regular schools, because every court student, by definition, is classified as "high-needs." According to EdSource calculations based on state Department of Finance figures, a court school last year received \$17,428 per student, compared with the \$12,546 a regular school with the same student demographics would receive.

REDEMPTION

After his arrest in 2012, Josue Valdez's probation officer suggested he take a class on emergency medical response. "I fell in love with it right away," Valdez said. "It was something that would take me out of the lifestyle that was easy."

His path also crossed three Emergency Medical Technician instructors, who told him of similar turning points in their lives and urged him to pursue his dream. His teacher, Nicole Crosby, prepped him for a transition back to school.

He completed the pre-EMT program at camp while earning credits toward high school graduation. When he was released in 2013, he was referred to an adult school where he completed his diploma. A year later, he finished at the top of his class and passed the test required to work as an EMT.

Valdez has a new goal — to become a paramedic. He begins a program at Sacramento State University this year, with a full scholarship.

2012 - 2016 County Juvenile Court Schools ADA (Average Daily Attendance)

Source: California County Superintendents Educational Services Association

County	2012-13 JC ADA	2013-14 JC ADA	2014-15 JC ADA	2015-16 JC ADA
Placer	31.68	27.34	24.74	19.34
Plumas	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Riverside	333.78	293.43	224.57	252.51
Sacramento	245.42	254.65	249.34	226.60
San Benito	9.53	10.17	5.00	8.38
San Bernardino	348.12	325.06	337.43	320.31
San Diego	1,305.57	1,094.57	840.20	693.86
San Francisco	118.14	109.84	93.69	83.65
San Joaquin	185.79	155.08	165.21	163.33
San Luis Obispo	41.67	28.04	30.19	30.00

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Rows with zeroes indicate a county has no court schools. Average daily attendance refers to the average number of students in attendance on any particular day.

State to review South El Monte after mayor caught in bribery scandal and critical financial audit

By **Ruben Vives**

SEPTEMBER 1, 2016, 4:40 PM

The state will probe South El Monte's administrative and financial controls in the wake of a bribery scandal involving the city's mayor and a critical audit.

State auditors in California State Controller Betty T. Yee's office plan to go through the city's ledgers, payroll records, contracts, audits and personnel records Sept. 6, according to a letter sent to Jennifer Vasquez, the acting city manager for South El Monte.

The letter states that the investigation is being done in part at the request of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and after a review of financial reports and audits for fiscal years 2012 through 2015.

"I have concluded that there is reason to believe that the annual reports of financial transactions by the city are false, incomplete, or incorrect," Yee wrote in the letter, adding that auditors will need to verify the information in those reports.

The audit comes days after the city manager abruptly quit and just weeks after the mayor was charged in a federal bribery case. The mayor pleaded guilty Thursday.

Last week, Anthony Ybarra, who had worked for the city for more than a decade, resigned as city manager. He denied that the city's problems, including the bribery scandal, had anything to do with his resignation.

His exit followed the resignation of Mayor Luis Aguinaga, who stepped down after it was revealed in July that he regularly accepted bribes from a contractor doing business with the city.

Aguinaga admitted that, from 2005 to September 2012, he regularly accepted bribes of \$500, with cash payments left in a City Hall bathroom or inside the passenger-side pocket of a car, according to the U.S. attorney's office.

The long-running corruption scheme involved a contractor who provided construction and engineering services to the city.

At least two audits, including one by a firm hired by South El Monte last year, criticized the management of the city and, among other things, singled out its relationship with two firms.

Last September the town's independent auditors advised the town to investigate its internal financial controls.

Released in June, the resultant audit found that South El Monte's city manager — acting without council approval — authorized a series of contracts and payments involving the town's grant-writing and engineering firms. The audit raised questions about the contracts.

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For more Southern California news, follow [@latvives](#) on Twitter.

UPDATES:

4:40 p.m.: This article was updated to indicate that South El Monte Mayor Luis Aguinaga pleaded guilty Thursday.

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